

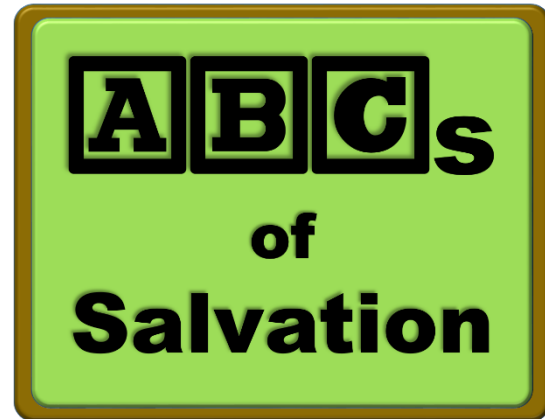
Have You Studied the ABCs?

May 24, 2018 | Pastor Dan

PART 4

It took three articles to cover the first part of the ABCs of salvation. In almost every example of this plan, the A stands for Admit, although some used the word Accept. The idea is the same. The indication is that, before God will save me, I have to admit that I am wrong. That seems to say that I am required to do something before God will grant me the gift of His grace.

Of course, if that is true, then grace is not grace, and salvation comes by merit, which, of course, the Bible makes clear is not the case.



Believe

The second letter of the ABCs is B, and in every example that I have seen stands for believe.

Different versions of the ABCs expressed this in different ways.

- Believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins.
- Believe that Jesus is God's son.
- Believe Jesus is Lord and Savior.
- Believe God's promise.

All of these are fair and accurate expressions of what happens during the process of salvation. No one would argue that believing is not a vital part of the process. The problem comes in understanding what is meant by believe, how believing takes place, and who is able to believe.

The word believe is the verb form of the noun faith. Faith is something we possess, but believing calls for action. The Bible makes it very clear that where there are no actions, no good works, no obedience to Christ, there never was faith, and therefore, no salvation.

I won't include the whole text in this article, but take time to read [James 2:14-24](#), then come back to this page.

If you read the text in James, you should notice that faith without words is dead. In verse 24, James said, "A person is justified by works and not by faith alone." That seems a direct contraction to what Paul wrote in [Eph. 2:8-9](#), but there is no contradiction.

Both Paul and James agree that where there is true saving faith, there will be works. Where did they learn such a profound truth? They learned it directly from Jesus.

Over and over, Jesus taught that the person who truly loved Him is the person who obeys His commandments. We are fond of quoting Jesus' invitation in [Matt. 11:28](#), "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But Jesus did not stop there. In the first words of the next verse, He continued, "Take my yoke upon you..." Christ calls us, not just to give us rest, but because He intends to make something out of us.

Matt. 4:19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Here are some other texts where Jesus taught the same idea, relating works (obedience) to salvation. [Matt. 7:24-27](#); [Matt. 12:50](#); [Mark 8:34](#); [Luke 11:28](#); [John 13:17](#); [14:15, 23-24](#); [15:10, 14](#).

To simply believe that Jesus is Lord or is the Son of God is not sufficient to gain salvation. There are thousands or maybe millions of people in church (and not in church) who profess to be Christians bound for heaven simply on the basis that they believe.

Recently, a friend, who is a faithful and active church member, and I discussed the subject of salvation. He said to me, "All you have to do is believe to be saved."

I replied, "Believe what?"

He answered, "Believe in God, that He exists, that He created everything."

First, I explained to him that nowhere in the Bible does God promise salvation to those who simply believe in God. The only means of salvation is belief in Christ.

Next, I pointed out to him what James wrote in his letter...

James 2:19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!

Satan and his minions all know who God is. They all know who Jesus is. They know that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for sin and that He resurrected. They know that He is Lord of Heaven and earth. Yet neither Satan nor any demon has any hope of salvation. Their belief is insufficient and ineffective for salvation, because it does not lead to good works, which proves that they do not truly acknowledge the lordship of Christ.

In almost every case, the primary Scripture referenced in the B-Section of the ABCs of salvation was John 3:16. This is a subject I will not pursue here, but what has happened is that the church – at least the evangelical church – has built its doctrine of salvation primarily around one single verse taken out of context.

John 3:16 is not the gospel. It is only one verse of the gospel that cannot be correctly interpreted, understood, or applied apart from all of the rest of the gospel message.

The person who truly believes in Christ unto salvation will love Him to the point that they will search for ways to be obedient and will not be complacent to simply sit in a pew each Sunday and never lift a hand for the kingdom.

Confess

The final word in the ABCs of salvation is the C-word, Confess. Once again, I do not believe that anyone would deny that confession is an integral part of what happens during the salvation process. The question concerns what we are called to confess.

Many versions of the ABCs said something similar to this: “Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord to others.” They typically follow this statement with [Rom. 10:9-10](#).

Read these verses carefully, and you will notice that there is nothing in these verses that require a confession of faith for salvation. We have already seen that a statement of what a person believes is insufficient for salvation unless accompanied by a zeal to be obedient. There is no salvation in simply confessing that I have faith in (believe in) Jesus Christ.

Instead, these verses call for a person to confess Christ as Lord. Notice that we are not called to make Christ our Lord. We have nothing to do with making Christ Lord. Jesus is Lord of all things in heaven and earth, of principalities and powers, of Satan and all demons, whether we confess Him as such or not.

The verses instruct us to confess Christ as Lord – to express audibly to others that we are the servants of Christ. A lord is someone who has absolute authority over another and the power to direct his or her every step. Such a confession implies a yielding as a slave to his master. The confession of Christ as Lord includes a willingness as well as a desire to serve Him as He directs.

Many other versions of the ABCs include something like “Confess your sins to God.” This expression is then supported by quoting [1 John 1:9](#).

I recently interviewed with a group of deacons, and the subject of evangelism came up. I asked them to quote a verse from the Bible that related sin to the salvation process. The most senior deacon in the group quoted [1 John 1:9](#). He was not happy when I challenged him on this.

Here is another example of building a theology around one verse of Scripture taken out of context. The Apostle John is not writing to lost people in his epistles, but to the church. He is addressing people who are already saved. In fact, a study of the New Testament will reveal that there is no scriptural reference that makes a direct link between confession of sin and the process of salvation.

People who object to this statement typically refer immediately to Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 following Pentecost. There, Peter said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...” Yet Peter never used the word “confess.” Our

problem is that we have confused confession with repentance. Many believe that confession is the same thing as repentance, but they are not the same thing.

Confessing my sins is not much different from admitting that I am a sinner, and we have already spent a good deal of time discussing that subject.

A third version of the C-word of the ABCs said, “Choose to allow Jesus to save you.” I am not even going to go there, but I will write more about repentance and the salvation process in a later post.

I will close this posting by saying that there is no easy ABC formula for the salvation process. The process is not so complicated, but there is too much to boil down to some simple formula.

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “So let us leave behind all these boys’ philosophies – these over-simple answers. The problem is not simple and the answer is not going to be simple either.”